

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY  
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 158573

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, SP, UK

SUBJECT: SPANISH INTEREST IN REPLACEMENT FOR HELICOPTER  
CARRIER DEDALO

1. SENIOR SPANISH NAVAL AND CIVILIAN LEADERS HAVE IN  
CONVERSATIONS WITH US OFFICIALS REPEATEDLY RAISED THEIR  
STRONG INTEREST IN OBTAINING A REPLACEMENT FOR THEIR  
AGING HELICOPTER CARRIER, THE DEDALO, VINTAGE 1943.  
ACQUIRED FROM THE US SOME YEARS AGO, THE DEDALO IS  
INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT AND EXPENSIVE TO KEEP IN OPERATION  
AND IS UNSUITABLE AS A PLATFORM FOR SPAIN'S RECENTLY-  
ACQUIRED AV-8 MATADOR, S. THE SPANISH INTEND TO BUILD A  
SEA-CONTROL SHIP BUT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT IS A NUMBER OF YEARS  
DOWN THE ROAD. THUS, THEY NEED IN THE NEAR FUTURE A  
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GAP-FILLER BETWEEN DEDALO AND THEIR NEW SHIP.

2. SPANISH INTEREST IN POSSIBLE US SHIPS FOR THIS PURPOSE  
HAS FOCUSED ON THE OKINAWA-CLASS LPH, APPARENTLY IN THE  
BELIEF THAT WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TARAWA-CLASS LHA,  
ONE OF THE EARLIER CLASS SHIPS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE. HOWEVER,  
US NAVY NEEDS FOR AMPHIBIOUS LIFT CAPACITY ARE SUCH THAT

NO LPH IS EXPECTED TO BE RETIRED FROM ACTIVE SERVICE UNTIL 1991, AND THE SPANISH HAVE BEEN SO INFORMED. WE HAVE CONSIDERED ALTERNATIVE WAYS THE USG MIGHT ASSIST THE SPANISH, INCLUDING OFFERING TO BUILD A SUITABLE SHIP, BUT WE SIMPLY ARE UNABLE TO SATISFY SPANISH DESIRE FOR A NEAR TERM SOLUTION.

3. IN TRYING TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THIS LEGITIMATE SPANISH NAVY INTEREST, WE HAVE CONSIDERED WHETHER THE HMS BULWARK, A COMMANDO CARRIER RECENTLY PLACED INTO INACTIVE RESERVE, MIGHT BE AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE. BULWARK IS LARGER THAN A US LPH (27,000 TONS VS. 18,000 TONS -- DEDALO IS 16,000 TONS), AND SPAIN MIGHT BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF ONGOING MATERIEL SUPPORT FOR THE BRITISH SHIP. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO IDENTIFY A BETTER OPTION AT THIS TIME.

4. WE WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY RAISING THIS MATTER, WITH FO IN FIRST INSTANCE, TO DETERMINE WHETHER HMG WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER SELLING OR LOANING BULWARK TO THE SPANISH NAVY. IF HMG IS AGREEABLE, WE INTEND TO INFORM THE SPANISH OF THIS POSSIBILITY AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO RAISE THE MATTER DIRECTLY WITH HMG. IT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR THAT THE USG WOULD NOT BE A PARTICIPANT OR INTERMEDIARY IN SUCH A TRANSACTION AND THAT THE TERMS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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CONDITIONS WOULD BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN THE UK AND SPAIN.  
VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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